

Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award Five Finalists - 2009

Named for the beloved former governor of South Carolina and his equally beloved wife, the Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award was created to recognize the significant contributions made to public education by the more than 15,000 School Improvement Council members who volunteer in every public school in the state. Each year a single winner is chosen to receive the award while four additional SICs are recognized with Honorable Mentions. Other high-scoring schools can receive Honor Roll status. Call SC-SIC at 800-868-2232 or visit www.sic.sc.gov for more information and begin preparing your 2009 application now. Below are very brief descriptions of the Five Finalists for this year's Riley Award – and your SIC could be the next Riley winner!

The Children's School at Sylvia Circle, Rock Hill School District 3, Rock Hill Rod Benfield, SIC Chair; Sandra Lindsay-Brown, Principal

This Montessori school's SIC focused on closing the achievement gap for their very diverse student population. The SIC focused their attention on ensuring that the various subgroups met Adequate Yearly Progress – especially in Science. The Council's efforts included recruiting a professor and honor students from nearby Winthrop University to provide tutoring; organizing a science fair; and putting together a school trip to the Space Camp in Huntsville, AL – with scholarships for needy students. The results of their efforts were reflected in improved absolute and improvement ratings on their school report card.

Hunt Meadows Elementary School, Anderson School District One, Easley Alison Pearson, SIC Chair; Nancy Prince, Principal

This small rural school took on some big challenges when they created committees to focus on Strong Families, Beautification and Data Collection/Grants. SIC members developed programs to help families gain information and assistance regarding both physical and mental health challenges; they initiated a Garden Club, cleared the nature trail and identified the trees for the science teachers; and they developed a system of data collection that has increased the schools ability to successfully apply for grants and awards.

Mauldin High School, Greenville County School District, Mauldin Michael Guarino, SIC Chair; Ann Miller, Principal

The SIC from this large, suburban high school focused on creating a sense of community in a sprawling area with numerous feeder schools and a positive identity for their school following considerable negative publicity from an incident perpetrated by a handful of students. They developed strategies, engaged community partners and secured monetary resources to launch a comprehensive public relations campaign. Their outreach has resulted in a newfound community respect for the school, greater participation of the community in the school, and increased student engagement in community activities.

Morningside Middle School, Charleston County School District, North Charleston Sherrel Brown, SIC Chair; Kala T. Goodwine, Principal

Morningside Middle School is an urban Title 1 school whose students face many challenges that come with poverty. The SIC credits their principal with building a strong foundation upon which they have to launched much-needed actions to foster improved student achievement. Some SIC sponsored activities include: a PACT carnival; a student reading competition; student leadership programs; a student/teacher relationship building program called Bridges; and a variety of programs to support the faculty. This council has gone from non-existent to exemplary in three years – and they mobilized the entire school community to focus on school improvement.

Round Top Elementary School, Richland School District Two, Blythewood Gary S. Alexander, SIC Chair; Jeaneen M. Tucker, Principal

Round Top is located in a rapidly growing suburban area that includes many residents new to South Carolina. The SIC developed a variety of strategies with this diverse population in mind. Activities focused on divisive traffic issues; a formal process that creates a commitment to academics among administrators, teachers, parents and students; a program to bolster ELA scores; and a survey to elicit feedback on teaching, testing and communication. The SIC's evaluation of these activities shows enhanced community support, improved traffic safety, a 41% increase in book circulation, and a tangible method of providing feedback to teachers to enhance effectiveness.